

Pedagogy Matters!: Creating a Model of Practice Which Reflects the Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning

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Abstract: This practice based paper is about creating a model of practice which reflects the Principles of effective Learning and Teaching. Within these Principles the base premise is that learning and teaching is people centred; and therefore the core business of education is to improve learning outcomes and opportunities for learners and teachers to access effective learning and teaching. To do this, one must also acknowledge the importance of learning and that relevant programming and effective delivery are vital; however it is also the pedagogies employed that facilitate the learning. For the purpose of this paper pedagogy refers to the art and Science of learning and teaching. Effective pedagogies will create opportunities for effective learning and teaching.

Keywords: Pedagogy, Principles of Effective Teaching and Learning, Catering for Diversity, Improving Student Learning, Creating Accessible Education



Figure 1: Pedagogy Matters

People Matter; Learning Matters; Pedagogy Matters!

TEACHING IS FIRST and foremost about people. An inclusive learning community is 'A learning community that values, respects, supports and openly engages all participants in the learning process, and through inclusive practice provides access to and engagement with effective learning and teaching for all' (Cara: 2006). Education can provide opportunities and 'open doors' for people personally and professionally. It is through and with education that societies demonstrate that 'People matter; Learning matters!' Students of 'special needs' especially require an inclusive learning community that recognizes, values and builds their unique contributions to the learning environment. In reality, all students are students of special need; and therefore must be adequately catered for. To do this one must have effective means to facilitate learning; thus pedagogies matter. Accessible learning and teaching is the result of the employment of effective engaging pedagogies based on core Principles that create the opportunity for supportive learning environments. This practice focus paper is relevant to all levels and sectors of education because it reflects on a holistic approach for creating this inclusive learning community.

Prologue

As a young child, the author always knew that she would be a teacher; there was nothing else that excited her more than learning. And as her mother often reminds her, the author was an incessant questioner of everything and anyone in her quest for knowledge and understanding. But the impetus for the author's desire to teach was that she recognized as a child in her first year of schooling, that something was amiss in education. Even at this young age, as the author observed classmates being punished for not understanding; the author was questioning the status quo. As she overheard the Infant Mistress telling her parents not to teach her mother's native tongue because it would hinder her English skills and saw no support for her multilingual classmates; the author recognised that there had to be a better way to help all students. And; the final straw was when the author saw 'special classes' being created for those who did not meet the norm of the day. These examples of past events, essentially separated, boxed and labelled many students. The author knew then that education was NOT stimulating learning for all. She knew then as she still knows now, that education should be better for all students and that she could and would make a difference. The author is still as passionate about education today and is still working at 'Making a Difference' because People Matter, Learning Matters and Pedagogy Matters. She strongly believes that:

All students are entitled to,
An excellent education and
Genuine opportunity to succeed
Irrespective of which school they attend,
Where they live or their home background. (Kosky, 2004)

Hence education is important since it provides opportunities in a broad range of areas including the personal, professional, social and the economic. It provides the means for social equity and more importantly, access. Since, 'Structured inequality rests as much upon restricted access to language and the world of thought as it does upon other resources such as jobs, money, sex and status' (Edgar, 1989: vii), it is vital that educators provide access to quality education. Pedagogy matters!

Introduction

Educators in Australian Government schools are expected to demonstrate accountability and improved student learning outcomes. The Department of Education and Training (as it was then known), introduced research based PoLT (Principles of Learning and Teaching) as a tool for educators to reflect upon and improve their practices in schools. PoLT for Prep to Year 12 articulates six Principles that encourage professional dialogue to strengthen pedagogical practices. The Principles include a range of premises to build best practice. Refer to Figure 2. By evaluating practice within these parameters, it allows teachers to use a common language; a common reflective tool and a united means of deciding current and future directions based upon the findings through collegial and collaborative discussion.

Figure 2: The Principles of Learning and Teaching (DE&T, 2001)**The Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12 (PoLT)**

- The learning environment is supportive and productive
- The learning environment promotes independence, interdependence and self-motivation
- Students' needs, backgrounds, perspectives and interests are reflected in the learning program
- Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application
- Assessment practices are an integral part of learning and teaching
- Learning connects strongly with communities and practice beyond the classroom

Doda and Thompson (2002) argue that, 'In order to truly transform classrooms, schools, school districts, educators must be willing to have themselves transformed as well...Change occurs as a result of educators reflecting upon, evaluating and expanding their own beliefs regarding the education of young people. Through the expansion of one's beliefs, shared visions can be developed that result in more meaningful learning experiences for both adults and students.' Therefore, to enhance transformative practice one must recognise the importance of teacher reflection that leads to pedagogical change over time. Using PoLT as a reflective tool allows this change to occur.

Context

The development of the Principles draws on recent National and International research. The Principles, the support materials and PoLT training program were built upon other successful Australian initiatives such as the Science in Schools (SIS) and Middle Years Pedagogy Research and Development (MYPRAD). Consultation and trialling occurred in 2004 with 44 schools from seven clusters as the pilot program. To ensure relevance and validity, extensive consultation had taken place within the education community.

Currently PoLT has been delivered to approximately 50% of government schools. This training program included professional development for school co-ordinators and cluster educators (area co-ordinators) to conduct PoLT within their own schools. In keeping with today's technological advances, online resources are available. To develop embedded and sustainable practices, tertiary educators were also hired as consultants to support schools.

The author has been privileged to be a PoLT school co-ordinator, a cluster educator initiating PoLT for schools and a Tertiary educator hired to facilitate and support schools. As an individual educator, the author has also incorporated these Principles of best practice at all levels and sectors of education from pre-school to tertiary and also within preservice teacher education.

Since authentic practice would come from the work of those in the field, the implementation and use of PoLT in schools recognised teachers as active researchers. Teachers actually initiate, develop and own the changes in practice and application within their classrooms and schools. They collect their own data and can individually and/or collaboratively review their practice. Additionally, the data can be aggregated to inform planning for relevant and timely action plans that reflect local needs. Component Mapping is a key feature of the process whereby surveys of staff and students, give teachers new perspectives on their teaching. To

ensure that teachers would take part in this reflective process, this process was not to be tied to formal evaluative processes which already exist in schools. This enabled schools and PoLT co-ordinators to positively and proactively invite staff to take part in the process without fear of recrimination, comparison or reprisal. The process was confidential.

The Principles in Practice

The PoLT process supports schools/clusters to improve learning and teaching through events and actions taken by teachers using the Principles to generate improvements in pedagogy. In turn, these improvements build student learning outcomes in a range of ways. Teachers and schools determine the evidence for effectiveness and make appropriate judgements leading to further action. The Mapping processes provide starting points for an ongoing action research cycle which is educator led. However, the nature of action research means that initial goals will develop and change as teachers share and reflect.

Teaching is a multifaceted and highly interconnected process and therefore an initial focus on one aspect of pedagogy usually leads to reflection on many other aspects. The Principles can support teachers to embark on a journey of evolving practice so that they can improve and monitor their progress (Figure 3). This includes eight steps: Inquiry into pedagogy; Identifying challenges/strengths/needs; Articulating goals; Critical Inquiry (action areas); Enacting change in pedagogy (the initiated projects); Collaborative reflection and evaluation which leads to Articulation of new goals. This is an ongoing cyclical process.

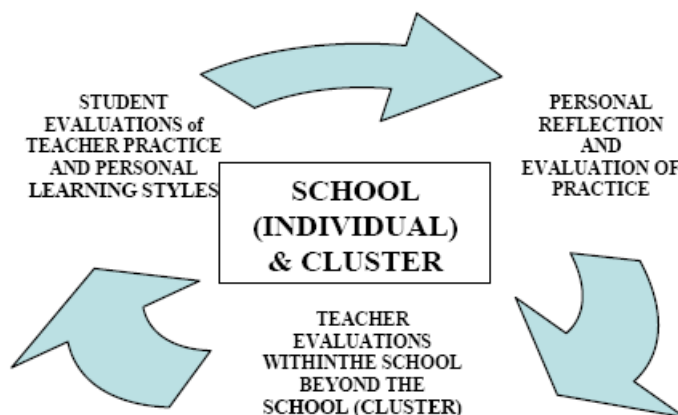


Figure 3: Cycle of Ongoing Reflective Practice

The change process is designed to develop locally based decisions about learning and teaching. The action plan is an agreed position generated at the school level and reflects proposed pedagogical actions. PoLT self-assessment tools assist professional learning teams in their pedagogical discussions. There are seven major instruments including teacher questionnaires, Component Mapping against Principles of best practice, student perception survey, student learning preference survey, professional learning team processes, curriculum audit tools, school audit tools and cluster communication guidelines. To meet school needs these are adaptable, inform the audit process and focus discussion in appropriate directions.

To review staff practice, PoLT coordinators conduct individual interviews (conversations) with each teacher who has self-mapped against the components. These teacher generated discussions are an opportunity to acknowledge and affirm teachers' expertise and professionalism and encourages them to extend their practices. It creates legitimate and authentic discussion and planning time. Ensuing action plans and pedagogical modifications result from informed decision making based on the data.

Rapid transformations including the knowledge explosion and technological advances mean that students and educators now face 'New literacies, New practices and New times' and different 'ways we see, read, think, research, reflect, write and make meanings to shape school life, work life, private life and public life in new multi-channelled learning environments' (Pandian, 2003). The current and future lifeworlds of today's students bears little, if any, resemblance to the needs and lifeworlds of students in the past. Since existing research points to the teacher being the single most important factor in student engagement (Luke & Freebody, 1990), then it is necessary for teachers to be reflective educators who continually build their craft. They also need to understand that relationship building is a vital component of successful learning experiences for teachers and students alike. The Department of Education and Training, Victoria, noted that 'The most powerful lever for reform is the transforming of teachers' practice. Teachers have a professional responsibility to continually improve their knowledge and understanding about the craft of teaching and translate that knowledge into practice' (Middle Years Matters 2004: 2). Using the PoLT tool enabled schools and teachers to start that reflective journey.

Multiple Layers of Simultaneous Implementation

As a long time leader of innovative effective educational practice, PoLT provided an opportunity to stimulate ongoing reflexive practice and continuous improvement. A tool that supports teachers to be pedagogically reflective practitioners and engages them in long-term professional and scholarly learning using common meta-language is most useful and relevant. PoLT was one substantial tool that the author used widely in many diverse roles and responsibilities and continues to evolve and use with modifications in current practice. See Figure 4: PoLT Implementation (DE&T website, retrieved June 2008. <http://www.sofweb@vic.gov.au>)

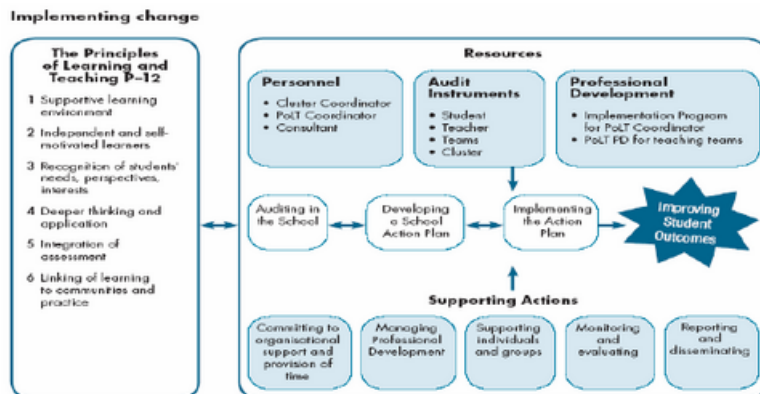


Figure 4: PoLT Implementation Strategy (DE&T, 2004)

As an educational consultant, the author used PoLT in multiple ways to build best practice including:

- Self reflection to document and evaluate her work with students (role modelling the process)
- Supporting school teachers to evaluate their individual practices and to understand their students
- Collating and using PoLT data to understand school pedagogical needs (levels, sections, schools)
- For a cluster of 7 schools to build a common vision and mission across sectors
- To facilitate preservice teacher (PST) use of the Principles in their current and future practice

Within the confines of the paper, a brief overview of each journey is provided.

As a Self Reflexive Practice

Annually, the author always monitors and self audits her practices. For example, in 2007, she completed the Graduate Certificate of Tertiary education to experience it prior to teaching it to staff. Over a year of teaching, she self audited using the PoLT Principles. Using this evaluative process evolved her practice and she created a series of digital folios which demonstrated the audit. This process allowed the author to role model that reflection enables the enhancement of practice and ultimately leads to improved student outcomes through the creation of accessible education.

Similarly within school settings the author has component mapped her practice (See Figure 4) across the six key Principles. This was discussed with a colleague who asked ‘Why are you under-rating yourself?’ This collegiate discussion allowed a range of perspectives on practice to be elicited. Next she surveyed the students, documenting their perceptions of teacher effectiveness. This was most interesting and somewhat daunting. However, looking at the student feedback certainly confirmed some aspects and opened her eyes to others. The perceptions trend was unanimous in recognising the need to incorporate more information communication technologies and community involvement. The Component Mapping was done pre, mid and post the projects so that progression and development was documented.

Taking this data into account the students devised a local issues project. By researching local newspapers, the class devised lists of community issues. To substantiate this, the students did an observation walk through the community and at the shopping centre, their survey confirmed that the previously prepared list was representative of how the local people felt. Through an open forum and discussion, the students planned a Japanese garden revamp project for the school community to create pride and ownership. To do this they needed funds; the principal agreed to match any funds raised. Next the students decided to run a restaurant day and also hold discos for each section of the school. Teams were designated and so began multiple student led projects which raised substantial amounts of money. The discos went very well and the class of grade 5/6s became the waiters/waitresses; bouncers in black suits; entertainment performers, publicity agents and chefs who prepared the healthy menu with their Prep buddies. Next the students tackled the garden which was thoroughly cleaned up, a new water fountain installed; new plants and tubs set up. It looked great and

the whole school enjoyed the transformation. The students had created a beautiful haven of peace within the school for all to use with pride and joy.

Next, the class tackled the outside community. The author organised for the class and another local school's class (penpals), to meet and plant trees to create an athlete's trail at a local community park. The students worked diligently to create that section of the park. The class felt strongly that building a community facility that provided a tree lined naturescape for relaxation; would help develop pride and ownership within the community. The class was proud of its efforts and its ability to promote community well-being. They knew that they had contributed significantly to their school and local community environments. They had ownership of all projects and were engaged from start to finish because the tasks were relevant, authentic and student driven. The students had effectively decided upon, instigated and implemented transformative change that benefited the whole school community and the local community. Within the school the Japanese garden became evidence of this and beyond the school walls, the athlete's trail at the park will provide an everlasting memory and space created by the students for the community in which they live. The projects also helped to build the PoLT areas of need as identified in the data.

Figure 5: Self Reflective Component Mapping (Sample)

Sample of Component Mapping: Teachers evaluate themselves against criteria
<p>Principle 4: Students are challenged and supported to develop deep levels of thinking and application. 4.4 The teacher uses strategies that challenge and support students to question and reflect.</p> <p>5: I consistently design tasks that are structured to challenge and support students to engage with deeper levels of understanding and practice through questioning, interpreting, and reflecting.</p> <p>4: Between these</p> <p>3: I tend to use tasks involving standard procedures and interpretations, but occasionally use challenging tasks that engage students with deeper levels of questioning and interpretation.</p> <p>2: Between these</p> <p>1: I almost always use tasks involving standard procedures with fixed response formats. I rarely use tasks that require deeper level questioning and interpretation.</p> <p>Personal Comment and Evaluation</p>

Personal Comment and Evaluation

4: I attempt to move students to deeper levels of thinking by teaching them to use strategies and tools such as Y charts, cross classification charts, mind Mapping, question keys, Idea charts, 5 whys, De bono thinking hats etc. I have created a thinking tool wall in the classroom and students use the wall to select appropriate and relevant thinking tools to use as they work on their inquiry. When presenting their findings to class, they also choose from a range of presentation methods to highlight their work. All techniques and tools are explicitly taught first and practiced, before they are added to the thinking wall so that students are aware of their capacity, suitability and limitation. The tools are role modelled in various class and individual activities. I can improve this by continually adding to our thinking tool kit and by ensuring the fluent use of these tools by maintaining our learning task centres and appropriate resources.

At a School Level

- For individuals, a similar process as to the self study process

Individuals volunteered and completed the individual and class surveys and met the PoLT co-ordinator to discuss the reasons for their choices. Justifying one's practice to another, encouraged staff to articulate their practice in terms of what they did, how they did it and more importantly why they did it. Discussion on ideas for projects using the individual and level trend data collated, enabled relevant and authentic projects with buddies of like needs. Thus ensuring supportive teams and combined projects that would build staff and student engagement and outcomes.

For example, a senior class teacher noted her lack of local community involvement whilst a junior class teacher needed to develop health and well being strategies. The classes were 'buddied' and worked on the concept of establishing brain food. In a nutshell, they went shopping and partnered with the local greengrocer to supply a weekly box of fruit. They educated parents and students alike about the value of having a water bottle and grazing on fruit and vegies during the school day. Through this collaborative project the classes met their aims and objectives, addressed student learning styles and created rich learning tasks through authentic interactive learning and teaching. The project was so successful that parents requested that the whole school take this on board; which they did. A highlight was multiple parent thank yous stating that this project stimulated their child to regularly eat such snacks daily (never had before). Teachers noted improvement in engagement and the lack of the lull in the school day because students were adequately hydrated and nourished. A side effect was the decrease in junk food at recesses because of the 'good quality' snacks that were being consumed which also helped enormously with those who lacked breakfast. This was transformative change that created lifestyle change.

- For levels or groups of staff

Level trends and needs became obvious by correlating the individual staff component maps. Collaborative projects were developed to meet those needs. Staff previously not involved became interested whilst watching exciting 'special' projects. The collaborative sharing enabled all staff to gain from the experiences of others and encouraged them to try some of

the best practices that were evolving throughout the school. Each project was used to role model effective learning and teaching and were presented to other staff at every opportunity including cluster meetings and cluster event days. This was action research at its best because it was based on student input. The educators became the initiators of change and the facilitators of improved learning outcomes for themselves, their students and their colleagues.

This was important because staff evolved and developed ownership of the work. The original design of each project was collaboratively developed but the implementation and eventual outcomes were entirely of each classes' decision making. The air of excitement and eagerness spread throughout the school. In instigating this work, it was crucial to be most aware of the already heavy workload experienced by the teachers. By working collaboratively on joint projects many learning outcomes were covered more effectively with higher student engagement. Securing funding enabled the release of participating teachers from their classroom to complete the interviews and surveying. This was a minor recompense but was viewed favourably. The collaborative projects also addressed school needs, supported individual and group learning and enhanced teacher practice. It was a win-win (Covey, 1999) situation for all.

- For whole school trends

This was an important opportunity for the school as a whole to consider the trends overall, and incorporate this into plans for improvement. It enabled individual teachers, levels of teachers and schools to recognise strengths and needs. To ensure that teachers were recognised for the good work that they were consistently doing, many professional development sessions were held for them to familiarise with and recognise that they already did many things that fit within the Principles of Learning and Teaching.

The whole school trends enabled more strategic planning and resourcing to take place; this was an important consideration with limited budgets within schools. This trend also enabled collaborative discussion to occur with neighbouring schools and within the cluster. But most importantly, it allowed schools to promote and encourage reflective and improved practices. By allowing individuals and groups of staff to initiate relevant and engaging projects, the staff and students involved, demonstrated and transformed the activities into meaningful events which not only improved their understandings but also increased morale and excitement for learning. In other words, it encouraged an atmosphere and ethos of growth, development and interactive learning and teaching. Within the schools grants ensured that the educators became the initiators of substantial and embedded practices.

At a Cluster Level

The seven schools (Primary/Elementary and Secondary) used the clustered data results to ascertain needs across the cluster. Unexpectedly, the Secondary trends mirrored the Primary (Elementary) school trends. Each sector had assumed that there would be no real correlation between the results; yet in fact the opposite occurred. This enabled the Cluster team to work on many initiatives for the entire Cluster. For example, the team conducted a whole Cluster curriculum day for 500 teachers with multiple workshops that targeted the noted areas of development. This was optimal learning with economies of scale which enabled Cluster discussion and sharing of expertise and skills. It stimulated Cluster schools familiarisation

with each other through public celebration of the philosophy and strengths of each school. It created ownership and promoted cross-sector collaboration. By using pooled resources and finances it enabled large scale joint ventures that would never have been possible for individual schools. Also, monthly Cluster get-togethers with a professional development focus were a highlight of the work. Creating a common dialogue between the sectors ensured the ability to talk, share and build proactive practices.

Once again, successful funding applications enabled the schools to move forward with substantive collaborative projects. The cluster gained from shared resources and provision of activities by one school for all students across the cluster. For example, the secondary schools had fully outfitted Science laboratories whilst Primary schools did not. Thus the Primary schools attended the Secondary schools for Science activities. All gained benefits including improved cross sector transition. In another example, the Secondary students were invited into the Primary schools to help in sport and ICT skills. This again enabled mentoring and as the research shows the mentors gained just as much as the mentored. Many collaborative activities were developed between sectors including staff collaborations such as combined sector Art shows and sports days across the Cluster.

At a Tertiary Level

As stated earlier, the author used the POLT Principles as a tool to evaluate and evolve her practice. Over an entire year she documented and examined her practice. She tied the Principles to various elements of best practice such as cultural and linguistic inclusivity. This allowed the author to specifically target areas of strength and need within very specific realms. She created overview cross classification charts; and created digital folios to document and present the findings to others (stimulating deeper levels of self reflection). Thus, self study was a means of sharing and collaborating with others across the dual sectors of higher education and also TAFE. See Figure 6 (Cara, 2007), Sample of PoLT cross classification chart. The question 'So What?' highlights possible actions stemming from the reflections. In other words, reflection then requires action and evolution of practice, for continuous improvement. To further enhance and build upon her reflections the author presented her self study at best practice conferences, forums and workshops. This further refined her practice because to present to other educators requires even deeper elaboration and modification through action-in-research and action-on-research (Schon, 1983, 1989). The author is a practitioner who modifies as she works, and also modifies with post reflective adaptations.

As a Consultant and Critical Friend to 7 Schools

In this role, the author supported schools undertaking the PoLT journey. Through provision of PoLT professional development for teachers, by maintaining contact and visiting schools she was able to support their reflective journeys. This was an important means of scaffolding PoLT implementation since 'The commitment and enthusiasm for PoLT was sometimes difficult to maintain following the workshops when teachers returned to their workplace and the myriad of priorities related to their work. The critical friend contacts are vital for keeping the momentum for the change process and providing support for action planning over the 3 year time frame' (ACEP, 2006). Each school individualised their projects to build upon strengths and to cater for needs. Essentially this was locally based authentic practice.

It is important to have some contextual understanding of the success of POLT implementation in Victorian schools. For instance, during 2005 and 2006, 650 Primary and secondary schools from Government, Catholic and Independent schools participated in the PoLT training program. The following is a summary of an online survey for 588 component mapped respondents (December, 2005) including Principals, Assistant Principals, Cluster educators, School co-ordinators and teachers (DE&T web, 2008):

- 96% agreed or strongly agreed that the Principles were an accurate depiction of effective teaching
- 94% agreed or strongly agreed that Component Mapping raised awareness of effective pedagogy
- 97% agreed or strongly agreed that the PoLT program increased awareness of effective teaching

In the survey, the Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12 were universally praised as a clear and a valid framework that captures the essence of quality pedagogy and provides a strong basis for a discussion, while the component Mapping was strongly endorsed as a professional development experience that provides impetus for change (ACEP, 2006).

ACEP, 2006 also found that surveyed participants believed PoLT positive outcomes included:

- The process provided the impetus for change
- The role of the Cluster educator was critical in driving the initiative
- The resources including the manual were useful guides for auditing and action planning
- Establishment of Professional learning teams encouraged discussion, support and collaborations
- Overall, principals and school co-ordinators indicated that PoLT was a great initiative

Further some main challenges noted included:

- Workload issues need to be monitored and teachers supported in the process
- All groups had to grapple with whether the main focus should be at the teacher, school and/or cluster level
- A universal theme was the issue of resources and teacher release which required funding, time release and/or personnel management
- Some co-ordinators noted difficulty in staff taking part and committing to the Principles

Overall, it can be seen that the use of PoLT as a reflective tool for individual teachers, groups of staff, schools and clusters of schools to improve practice and student learning outcomes; has been most successful. However, as with any initiative there are also issues and challenges to be acknowledged.

Figure 6: Issues Analysis Cross Classification Chart

TEACHER CAPABILITIES & RELEVANT POLICIES	ISSUES Wonder & awe: How to create excitement for, with and by learning	Inquiry Learning: Paradigm shift	Engagement: How to stimulate from start to finish	Challenge: How to find balance between challenge & comfort zones	Celebration: How to recognise, value and share to the benefit of all	SO WHAT? What can be Improved?
PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE Know how students learn Learning & Teaching Policy	Range of strategies & approaches, open ended tasks Survey of learning preferences	Scaffold to ensure student step by step development	Build upon successes Open ended tasks Authentic purpose Ownership	Scaffolded learning Inquiry learning Student ownership	Collaborative work, sharing with peers and the groups	Next year, Repeat learning preference surveys, graph results, use for analysis
Teach effectively Student Progress Policy	Varied teaching and learning experiences: Inclusive multimodal pedagogy	Role model best practice: Inquiry Teamwork Collaboration Effective teaching	Innovative multimodal Inclusive interactive pedagogy	Build skills that ensure task completion: explicit workshops	Role model best practice	Continue to refine pedagogical approach Document Case writing for team
Know the students Recognition of other Learning Policy	Build from their starting point-success breeds success	Explicit teaching of the processes	Opportunities to get to know each other TRIBES social competency	Buddy roles eg editing partners, study groups	Strengths, needs analysis Is done by all students	Establish new student kit, so that all new students complete surveys
Know the content	Research, readings, unit website to contain all : Lecture notes, Discussion board Experts	Student Inquiry journal, Information on website , aligned to learning goals	Clear explicit transparent information: course, tasks, dates, expectations, assessment rubrics	Open forums Students ask questions, share Issues, successes, Ideas	Range of assessment tasks that required presentation to group eg round table discussions	More timely posting of Information on website Program modification eg decrease tasks
PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE Plan for effective learning Core Attribute Policy	Open forums, seminar day, targeted sessions, guests	Core attributes explicitly stated on all tasks and activities	Range of activities reflecting multimodal learning and teaching	Open ended Tasks adapted to particular Interests and needs	Learners as teachers eg Reading presentations, jigsaw activities	End of year Home group celebratory activity
Assess learning effectively Student Assessment Policy	Informal Interviews, 6s analysis, Formal Informal surveys	Share best practice with all	Clear explicit transparent assessment that is Integral to learning	Authentic purpose, deep learning, student centred Inquiry	Presentation of digital portfolio of personal learning journey	Reassess gains made over the year Evaluate formal and Informal data
Create and Maintain effective Learning environment; VU Values, Mission	Inclusive practice Fun	Community Investigation	Group activities, peer support	Thinking: Habits of Mind, De Bono, TRIBES	Caring ethos Supportive atmosphere	Reassess Professionalism for staff & students
PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT Effective within Institutional context	Create authentic purpose – voluntary work	Orientation activities Whole day and week of activities	Building connections eg partner rural schools	Mentoring strategy I.e. staff member allocated	FUN: Mad Hair Day, JAM-after School program InterNational Student support	Repeat process, same staff to build further relationships
Reflect, evaluate, Improve practice Workplace Learning & Policy	Explicit targeted teaching-EY Literacy	Research topics School placement Mentors	Opportunities, guests, visits	Extra 5 week Buddy work	Buddy certificates	Next year DO IT EVEN BETTER!!!!

Issues and Challenges

As a leader in schools, the author supported staff skill development and enhanced learning and teaching for all students. PoLT was a useful tool to stimulate reflexive practices. However, initially PoLT was overwhelmingly not trusted by staff. Initially, the common fear was that it would be used as an auditing tool by Principals and Leadership. This meant continually juggling the needs and expectations of all staff. An important means of ensuring that staff would volunteer was to adamantly ensure that the process was never associated with the formal processes of staff review. This enabled complete confidentiality; which built effectiveness and impact since the process grew upon a basis of mutual trust.

Time management was also a major issue. Funding had to be attained to enable the time to co-ordinate, meet and support staff in their endeavours. There was no point in evaluating practice if we could not then instigate projects and activities to build areas of need and interest. It also required time allocation for staff release to attend individual and group meetings. And, importantly, it required leadership support and recognition that enabled and celebrated staff and student development. Schools had to invest in the co-ordinator role and the Cluster educator role, because time allocation of one day per week allowed the Cluster team to organise the major events that promoted understanding and application of the PoLT Principles. And as discussed, resourcing had to be allocated to enable the major events to be funded.

Documentation of the process was extensive and very time consuming. Inputting the data had to be manually done for each student and each staff member for every level and school. The sophistication of the software in the beginning was not adequate; but it gradually improved as implementation feedback was incorporated.

Successes and Gains

As a research based model PoLT enables schools and clusters to improve and monitor progress in learning and teaching across P-12. It is used by teachers for teachers. It is cyclic action research that is inquiry based and student centred. It promotes authentic learning and teaching in normal classrooms with real practitioners and real students. Practitioner research is an important means of effecting educational change since it is ‘...an invitation to learn, a means to tackle the tough questions that face us individually and collectively as teachers, and a method for questioning our daily taken-for-granted assumptions...’ (Mills, 1999: v). Importantly all participants talked about the elements that they would retain as part of their learning and teaching repertoire. The work itself was in fact, the creation of reflective practices.

Personally, individuals gained from the opportunity to reflect upon their practices in a supportive atmosphere. Professionally they gained through collaborative sharing and gained kudos for exemplary work. Presenting to the Cluster enabled cross-sector growth and built community connections and enhanced transition. For example, Primary/Elementary students attended the Secondary schools for specialised band practice, and Secondary students came into Primary schools to support a range of sessions. These partnerships were mutually beneficial to all parties. 100% of participants demonstrated self perceived and coordinator perceived growth and development in their pedagogy and engagement of students. All educators noted changes in their pedagogical approaches to meet the needs and interests of their students and school communities. This was phenomenal growth which was also evidenced in their

comments. Since all groups volunteered for participation one might also presume their willingness to adapt.

A sample of teacher voice included the following positive statements:

'It has been very useful to see both strengths and weaknesses in my teaching and student perceptions of their learning'

'It provided shared language between professional learning teams and across the year levels'

'I valued discussion of results with a colleague in a non-threatening way and focusing on improving areas of weakness and sharing my strengths'

'Using PoLT has increased professional exchange between teachers at our school with positive results'

'Staff are now ready to view change more favourably'

'As a leader in schools, PoLT provided me with a process and structure to support individual staff, students, the school community and the Cluster in its effort to improve practice and student outcomes'

Conclusion

The illiterate of the 21st Century
Are those who cannot Learn,
Unlearn And Relearn (Alvin Toffler)¹

Reflexive practice is essential if education is to meet the current and future potentials of all students. 2020 predictions that seventy percent of job categories, products and services have yet to be invented; that people will have up to thirteen career changes, six job changes, and, up to four retraining phases (Gibbs: 2001), emphasizes the development of education that can meet these changing needs. As Gardner (2000) argues, '...unless one has the opportunity to think about what one is doing and to reflect on what went well, what went poorly, and why, the chances for a long-term improvement curve are slight. Time for individual and joint reflection must be built into the schedule; if it is not, then genuine change is most unlikely to occur.' In summary, the use of the PoLT Principles of learning and teaching to reflect upon and enhance practice was successful.

This paper describes a brief overview of multiple layers of PoLT implementation across all sectors. It was a useful tool to stimulate reflective practice with ongoing monitoring and improvement. Teachers gained from reflective practices. They created engaging relevant student centred projects. The component mapping process was integral to the development of the locally based action research since it provided the evidence for that action. The generated profiles provided useful insights into teacher's current practices. The individual and

¹ Toffler quoted in Cara, 2006a:94

aggregated data also provided the basis for school action plans. The discussions provided an opportunity to acknowledge and affirm teachers' expertise and encouraged teachers to extend their practice. The main benefit however, was the opportunity to own the process and evolve it to suit the school community. It was teachers actioning their own research. They were in fact the effective practices.

Students gained ownership of collaborative projects and felt valued and listened to. The PSTs gained from using PoLT in a 5 week buddy project in schools. The experience of using POLT as a reflective tool was proactive and positive. We must continue to build minds that are flexible, open to new learning and able to adapt, modify and transform thinking into workable knowledge that can be utilized in current or future lifeworlds. As Cope and Kalantzis (2003) state, 'The new technologies, and more broadly the changing social worlds of work and citizenship, require a new educational response.' The response necessarily must be one that equips students for their future lifeworlds whatever that may be. Reflexive practice encourages flexible, evolving practice that will meet these needs. These life skills will arm students for the future.

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